



Job Verbunt of Holland and Kiri Thode of Bonaire take top trophies at Hi-Winds 2006

The 20th Anniversary edition of the Aruba Hi-Winds Windsurfing and Kitesurfing Tournament folded its tents to steal away until next year. The farewell party and awards ceremony filled the beach at Moomba Beach Bar and Restaurant with lovers of the sport that gathered to watch films not only of this year's races and antics, but great moments from the past that were presented courtesy of Charles Dasher, who chronicled the event over the years.

Taking top honors for the Men's Overall was twenty six year old Job Verbunt of Tilburg, Holland who came in first in the Slalom and second in Long Distance. Peter van der Lugt of Holland claimed second place and Juvannie Agostien of Bonaire was third.

Young Kiri Thode of Bonaire won King of the Huts at the tender age of sixteen, evidence that this young man will likely have a great future in freestyle boardsailing, not surprising, as he is cousin to Tati and Tonk Frans, two of the great names in the sport.

In general, a large contingent from Bonaire dominated this year's competition, with Patun Sargoza taking first place in the Masters Overall, followed by Hi Winds veteran Ricardo Albisu of Argentina. Jeager Sin Jago and Whitney Rudolf, both from Bonaire, took first place in the Juniors Overall and the Sports Overall, respectively.

In the Junior category, Arturo Soliano of Bonaire took first place, and Whitney Rudolf also grabbed another trophy for first place in Sport.

Fourteen-year-old Sara-Quita Offringa, Aruba's famed windsurfer that is making the pro circuit with the Professional Windsurfers Association and holds a world ranking, took the Queen of the Huts trophy, but she does not feel it is of any great consequence, as she was the only female competitor this year. She revealed that she is truly proud of her second place trophy for Prince of the Huts, meaning that she beat out many of the boys in the Freestyle trials, proving she is quite the competitor and feminist. Her brother Quincy took a trophy for seventh place in the Men's Slalom, evidence that for the Offringas, windsurfing is a family affair.

All the contenders agree that this year's competition, organized by JP van den Eerenbeemt, President of the Hi-Winds Committee, Evert Bongers and numerous others that deserve a pat on the back for all their hard work was a very special event. Not only because of the anniversary, but also as Bores van der Molen, a Dutch intern working with the committee commented, because of the wind. As if the fates knew that this was an important year, they blessed the event with excellent winds, making it a truly memorable competition for the participants and fans, ironically, not always what it has seen in the past. "For the Kitesurfers and Freestyle competitors it was particularly wonderful," imparted Bores, "they were able to do all the tricks that the judges want to see because the wind was perfect. The kite surfers were flying over the people watching on the beach, it really was a thrilling show to see."

Aruba says good-bye to the Aruba Hi Winds for another year, an event made possible this year through the sponsorship of Amstel Bright. The ninety amateur competitors are sure to spread the word of how perfect the conditions were in 2006, conditions that bring wind surfers to the island all year round, for an even bigger and better tournament in 2007!